(b) if not, the number of such reimbursement claims submitted before 1st May, 2004 and 31st October, 2004 still pending as on 31st January, 2005 with the Headquarters or the Regional Office (North) for preparing cheques for the amount?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) Medical claims of the CGHS pensioner beneficiaries are generally cleared in 4 to 6 weeks' time except in cases which require opinion of the expert Committee, involve relaxation of rules, verification of Hospital bills where the treatment was taken by the beneficiary in another city, or in the event of budgetary constraints.

(b) Receipt of medical reimbursement claims of CGHS pensioner beneficiaries is an ongoing/continuous process and a large numbers of claims are received daily. A total of 7460 medical claims of CGHS beneficiaries were received from April, 2004 to 31st October, 2004. Out of the 7460 medical claims, 22 claims are pending for verification against hospital bills and the remaining medical claims have been settled. The bills pertaining to the reimbursement claims for period ending 31.10.2004 that have been approved for reimbursement were sent to the Pay and Accounts Office, CGHS, Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi, before 31.1.2005 for making payment. The PAO, CGHS have in turn, confirmed that all the bills of CGHS Pensioner beneficiaries received in that office up to 31.1.2005 have been cleared.

Clinical trials on experimental drugs

530. SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that some major biotech companies had been conducting clinical trials on their experimental drugs without the approval of GEAC; and

(b) if so, the details of companies and action taken against them by DCGI?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) and (b) All biotech companies indigenously producing recombinant based therapeutic

products have to obtain necessary permission for undertaking clinical trial from the office of Drugs Controller General of India as per norms stipulated under Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Rules framed thereunder.

Approval of Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) is required for safe release of genetically engineered drugs into environment, as per the rules framed under the EP Act, 1986 issued by Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Not taking simultaneous approval from GEAC by M/s Shantha Biotech Pvt. Ltd. Hyderabad and Biocon India Ltd. Bangalore, for their indigenously developed r-Streptokinase Inj. and r-human insulin respectively, at the stage of clinical trial, have been considered as a procedural lapse and therefore *ex-post-facto* GEAC approval has been accorded for conducting phase-III clinical trial.

Easy and cheap supply of life saving drugs

531. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that life saving drugs have become inaccessible and unaffordable for common people;

(b) if so, whether Government are considering of making those life saving drugs more accessible and available; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) to (c) The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) monitors the availability and shortages of drugs and medicines based on the feedback received from State Drugs Controllers, NGOs and public complaints etc. The NPPA has not received any specific complaint/report regarding continuous non-availability of any specific medicines in the recent past.

In general the prices of medicines have not gone up unreasonably. It may also be noted that the percentage change in whole sale price index (WPI) for Drugs and Medicines is less as compared to that for all commodities during the past 4 years, as given in the enclosed statement.